

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A collaborative computing method comprising the steps of:
 - providing a collaborative computing system comprising at least one instant messaging client, the collaborative computing system including presence awareness features that automatically detect online entities that are logged into the collaborative computing system;
 - initializing said instant message client within a graphical user interface of said collaborative computing system;
 - ~~specifying establishing~~ at least one customizable search limitation for a search engine, said search limitation preventing users other than users belonging to a predetermined class of users from accessing data records pertaining to one or more predetermined online entities and preventing selected users from receiving data indicating an online presence of one or more predetermined online entities;
 - receiving a search initializing action from said graphical user interface;
 - responsive to said receiving step, presenting search input fields within said graphical user interface;
 - receiving input via said input fields that specifies a search pattern;
 - subject to said at least one search limitation, searching by the search engine at least one record source for online entities that satisfy said search pattern using the presence awareness features;
 - displaying a search result from said searching step within said graphical user interface;
 - selecting at least one of the online entities displayed in the search result; and

establishing a software-enhanced communication ~~not limited to~~ including at least one communication other than instant messaging related communications between a user of the instant messaging client and the selected online entity.

2. (Cancelled).
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said search initializing action comprises at most two user inputs.
4. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
displaying a menu option within said graphical user interface for said instant message client, wherein said menu option is configured to initiate said search view.
5. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
providing a keyboard combination to initiate said search view, whereby said keyboard combination is a hot-key combination.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
establishing a plurality of user specific search patterns; and
recording said search patterns so that said search patterns can be retrieved at a later time.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said record source comprises a first database that is a record source specifying at least one online entity and a second database having a data field, wherein said data field specifies an attribute relating to said online entity that is not specified within said first database, said searching step further comprising the steps of:

establishing a query that includes said data field; and
searching for at least one online entity using said query.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

specifying a plurality of record sources, each of which specifies at least one online entity, wherein said searching step further comprises searching said plurality of record sources for online entities that satisfy said search pattern.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

establishing at least one search preference that is used when performing said searching step, wherein said search result is based at least in part upon said search preference.

10. (Original) The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of:

establishing an order in which said record sources are accessed during said searching step.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

directly executing at least one software-enhanced communication involving said online entity and a user of said graphical user interface using said search result.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for establishing software-enhanced communications comprising the steps of:

specifying establishing at least one customizable search limitation for a search engine, said search limitation preventing users other than users belonging to a predetermined class of users from accessing data records pertaining to one or more predetermined online entities and preventing selected users from receiving data indicating

an online presence of one or more predetermined online entities;

receiving a user specified search pattern;

subject to said at least one search limitation, searching by the search engine a point of presence database for online entities having access to a collaboration software application which satisfy said search pattern, the collaborative software application including presence awareness features that automatically detect online entities that are logged into the collaborative computing system;

presenting a list of said resulting online entities;

receiving a selection of at least one of said resulting online entities contained within said list; and

establishing a software-enhanced communication session ~~not limited to~~ including at least one communication other than instant messaging related communications between said user and said selected online entity.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:

displaying a graphical user interface for an instant messaging component of said collaboration software application, wherein said graphical user interface provides a user selectable search option;

receiving a user selection for said search option; and

responsively presenting search input fields within said graphical user interface, wherein said search pattern is based upon data input into said search input fields.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein said software-enhanced communication session includes a type of communication other than instant messaging.

15-35. (Cancelled)